(a) the number of permanent workers in Military Engineering Service (MES);

(b) the number of existing vacancies;

(c) the action taken by Government to fill up the vacancies;

(d) the number of workers engaged through contract during the last three years; and

(e) the total payment made for labour contract during the last three years, year-wise in MES?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) The number of permanent workers in Military Engineer Service (MES) is 1,28,684.

(b) The number of existing vacancies in MES is 52209.

(c) The vacancies are filled up as per Annual Direct Recruitment Plan (ADRP).

(d) and (e) The number of workers engaged through contract and payment made for labour contract during the last three years is as under:—

Year	Workers engaged	Payment made
2005-2006	5553	Rs. 24,71,75,862/-
2006-2007	6441	Rs. 30,91,40,468/-
2007-2008	7142	Rs. 39,55,96,459/-

Purchase of more arms from USA than Russia

1731. SHRI S. ANBALAGAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India is purchasing more arms from USA than Russia as reported in newspapers recently; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reasons for shifting away from traditional and trusted ally of Russia?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) No, Sir. Procurement of defence equipment is made by the Government from various indigenous as well as foreign sources, including Russia and the USA, to meet the approved requirements of the Armed Forces, for adequate defence preparedness.

(b) Does not arise.

Decline in military tie ups and imports from Russia

1732. SHRI D. RAJA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that he had talks with the Russian Defence Minister Mr. Anatoly Serdyukov in a bid to resolve problems dogging ongoing mega military projects;

(b) if so, the details of the problems being faced and the outcome of the meeting;

(c) whether it is also a fact that there has been a decline in the military tie ups and imports from Russia recently and there is a tilt in favour of more trade with US, Israel, France *etc.*; and

(d) if so, the details of the military tie ups made with various countries during the last five years?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) and (b) Discussions were held between Raksha Mantri and the Russian Defence Minister when the latter visited India in September, 2008. Both sides reviewed the progress of ongoing bilateral defence cooperation matters. Issues of mutual interest in the areas of defence and security were also discussed which is a continuous process.

(c) and (d) Military tie ups and import of defence equipment is a continuous process and is based on the strategic requirements of the defence forces. The procurement of defence equipment is made in accordance with the prescribed procedures.

Installation of mobile towers in cantonment areas

1733. SHRI B. K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether with the upsurge in mobile phone use, military personnel in cantonment areas and military stations are handicapped because of low degree of coverage in the absence of mobile towers;

(b) whether Government has now decided to allow public sector and independent telecom service providers to erect mobile towers and lay optical fiber cables in cantonments and military stations; and

(c) if so, whether Government has weighed the security considerations related thereto?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (c) With a view to improve the coverage and quality of the communication services in the Cantonment areas, policy guidelines relating to provision of Defence land to Communication Operators to construct Shared Communication Towers and other Infrastructure to extend Communication Network to Cantonments have been issued by the Ministry of Defence. It has been decided that the Public Sector and Independent Infrastructure Providers (IP-1), who have been granted licence by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) to build, operate and maintain various services, such as Unified Access Services, Basic Services and Cellular Mobile Services, *etc.*, may be considered for allotment of Defence land on lease hold basis, to lay the Optical Fibre Cables and set up/construct shared communication towers on Defence land at cantonment areas on certain terms and conditions. Government have also duly considered security aspects while formulating the Policy guidelines.